

Backstairs at the White House

Exhumers of a Tragic Eve.

Washington — A young scholar, Edward Jay Epstein, has produced a book, "Inquest," which represents another effort to challenge the procedures, and in some instances, the findings of the Warren Commission which investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.



Epstein's book carries an impressive introduction by Richard H. Rovere, author, critic and magazine writer who feels that the author's probing and scholarly analysis are such as to make "journalists envious and ashamed."

By MERRIMAN SMITH
UPI White House Reporter

"Inquest" was started as a master's thesis in government at Cornell University. Other book-length works dealing generally with the same subject are in preparation or on sale, all with the common denominator of questioning whether the Commission went far enough in exploring the possibility that Kennedy's killer, Lee Harvey Oswald, was supported by another assassin who was firing at the same time.

Who's Ashamed?

Rovere may feel "ashamed" as a journalist for not having written the frequently abstract and highly legalistic Epstein tome, but his sentiments probably are not shared by reporters who covered the case in Dallas first-hand, or for that matter, by a number of highly competent newspapermen who studied closely and wrote about the Warren Commission report at the time it was issued.

Rovere notes:

"Mr. Epstein discloses that at least one large question of incontestable materiality—the number of rifle shots fired at the presidential party—was never resolved, not even, astonishingly, to the satisfaction of the commissioners themselves."

Quite understandably neither Epstein nor Rovere had any first hand knowledge whatever of the Dallas shooting. Those who were on the scene at the tragic moment, however, distinctly heard three shots and no more. There was no ballistic evidence of more than three shots; no evidence of any other weapon being involved than

the one used by Oswald.

There is no way known to man or legal evidence to prove that other shots were not fired, but in raising such serious questions as those posed by Epstein, one might expect the challenger to produce at least some form of positive suggestion.

Unfortunately, however, the Epstein book, like many similar works on the same sad subject, does little more than throw dust. Epstein laudably does not attempt to deal in sensationalism as some other critics of the Warren Commission report have done.

Scholars Can Trip

Even the most scholarly author, however, can trip over his over omnipotence. Epstein reviews the shooting in the opening paragraph of his book, telling first that Kennedy was shot twice and fatally wounded.

"The President was immediately rushed to Parkland hospital, where, despite desperate efforts to prolong his life, he died at 1 P. M."

If Epstein had done a bit more scholarly research, he would have found that the Parkland hospital doctors primarily were trying to restore life. For practical purposes, Kennedy was killed instantly. Doctors on the case said quite frankly at the time that had the patient been anyone other than the President of the United States, he would have been examined and then classified as "dead on arrival."

The 1 P. M. time of death was selected almost arbitrarily because the medical experts decided at about that time that further efforts to restore life were useless.

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